

July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000



John G. Rowland  
Governor

# State of Connecticut Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission 2000 Annual Report





To coordinate and provide  
access to resources by  
developing and  
recommending to the  
Governor and the Legislature  
policy for the advancement  
of the Latino & Puerto Rican  
Communities



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# Report of the Chair



**Chairperson**  
Ramón L. Arroyo

Dear Governor Rowland:

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission began the year looking within, in order to identify those areas in which the Commission could enhance its productivity and leverage the skills and abilities of both the staff and its commissioners. As a result, a retreat was scheduled and held on February 11 and 12, 2000 at the Hartford Marriott in Rocky Hill.

The Commission invited individuals experienced in the areas of public speaking, managerial assessment, strategic planning and program development. These individuals were members of the Connecticut Voices for Children and consultants from the National Executive Service Corps of Central Connecticut. With their guidance, we were able to develop several surveys to identify agency strengths and weaknesses, areas where we could grow, and the processes that needed to be put in place in order to achieve the growth. We created lists of commission and staff tasks and responsibilities necessary to meet the goals of the agency and explored the creation of committees and why they are important to the work of the organization. We prepared a mechanism for minute taking and filing in order to give access to the public of the actions taken at commission meetings. Finally, we came away with an actual plan of action to be implemented on a monthly basis as we do the work of the agency.

I am very proud to report that during my watch as Chairperson of this commission, many of the tasks outlined in the management assessment study developed at the retreat have been adopted by the commission with the help of agency staff.

The Commission has been active in the community by supporting the following initiatives important to the Latino and Puerto Rican communities of our state:

1. In January, we held a presentation regarding a monument sponsored by the Organization of Puerto Ricans United (OPU) in tribute to the Puerto Rican families of the state. Our agency, through its staff, looked at the possibility of having legislative representatives request matching bond funds in support of this project. At the time, the Organization of Puerto Ricans United were looking to raise about \$250,000 needed for the project.
2. Representative Kenneth Green addressed the commission regarding legislation to restore the voting rights for ex-convicts. He was specifically looking for the commission to write a letter in support of the legislation, send a representative to be part of the coalition to restore voting rights and for the commission to do legislative work on the bill.
3. We were approached by DemocracyWorks to support their Campaign Finance Reform bill and testify at a public hearing.

4. We took the lead on such legislative issues as court interpreters and creation of accreditation standards in Connecticut; and, bilingual education. We also supported access and affordability to higher education; the digital and technological divide; tax strategies to help working poor families and families with children; affordable housing; individual development accounts; minimum wage; and, family and medical leave act-pay equity.

The Commission, in collaboration with State Representative Minnie González, held a public hearing on May 22, 2000 to discuss the issue of workplace discrimination in the state. We had participation from the United States Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDF). As a result of this hearing, the EEOC and PRLDF identified one major company that is discriminating against its employees on the basis of language and were moving forward with mediation and possible court action in the absence of a resolution at the mediation level. Our commission is in communication with both agencies in order to report back on the outcome of the potential suit.

LPRAC was also approached by the Latino Leadership Development Network in order to seek our co-sponsorship of a Leadership Summit to be held every two years. We accepted the invitation and are a co-sponsoring agency along with Leadership Greater Hartford. The Summit is scheduled to be held on Friday, December 8, 2000 at the Farmington Marriott Hotel in Farmington.

The Connecticut Institute for Municipal Studies and the Commission on Children approached us to co-sponsor a “Helping Families to Build a Better Life” conference with the goal of promoting educational reform within the State’s school systems. After the conference to be held November 2, 2000, participants will be asked to join a working group in 5 different areas in order to help with writing the blue print that will serve as the catalyst for the change. The five work groups are “School Financing, School Governance, Empowerment, Schools and Communities and State Budget Policy”. The intended date for completion of the document is January 9, 2001.

Overall, the Commission has had a very good year. We are working at almost full capacity in terms of the staff and have one position for which we are currently recruiting that will help in advertising the good work that we do annually.

I thank you for your participation in agency functions, look forward to your continued support and promise another year full of innovative activities and involvement on the part of the commission and staff.

Sincerely,

Ramón L. Arroyo  
Chairperson

# Commissioner Biographies

## Ramón Arroyo, Chairperson



**(Public Citizen)** of Hartford, was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Connecticut. Currently, he is a Senior Field Representative in the Office of Human Services for the City of Hartford. Mr. Arroyo has participated and volunteered in many organizations. He is currently the President of the Puerto Rican and Latino Alliance (PAC) of Connecticut and the Chairperson of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission.

The following is a list of the memberships he has held:

Hartford's Charter Revision Commission  
Capitol Area Substance Abuse Council, member of Board of Directors  
Hartford Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
Hogar Crea of Connecticut, state board of directors  
Puerto Rican PAC, President  
Boys Scouts of America  
Long River Council, Volunteer Career Awareness Speaker  
Quirk Middle School PTSA-President  
María Sánchez Baseball Little League, Assistant Coach  
West Middle School, PTA-Vice President  
Neighborhood Legal Services, member of board of directors  
Hartford's Public Access Television, member of board of directors  
Hartford's Democratic Town Committee-Third District, Spokesperson

The **House Majority Leader David Pudlin** appointed Mr. Arroyo to LPRAC in 1999.

## Ivette Servera, Vice Chairperson



**(Small Business and Economic Development)** of Farmington, works for the State of Connecticut Judicial Department, Adult Probation, at the Bristol office. She attended Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport where she received a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work with a minor in Sociology. Ms. Servera is a member of many community organizations including: past President of Handicapped Children of Puerto Rico, Bridgeport; La Danza, Bridgeport; Executive Board of Boys Scouts; President of La Casa De Puerto Rico; Leadership Greater Hartford –Marketing and Education Committees; 2nd President of Hartford Lions Club; ASPIRA Hartford effort; Hispanic Journalists Association; Connecticut Probation and Parole Association; and Republican Hispanic Women's Task Force. She volunteers with the American Red Cross on the Disaster Action Team and is a Community Liaison Volunteer. She is a frequent contributor as a writer to El Extra News, Spanish Newspaper in Hartford. She is currently a board member with the United Way.

**Governor John G. Rowland** appointed Ms. Servera to LPRAC in 1999.



## **Elena de Murias, Secretary**



**(Arts and Culture)** of Bridgeport, is the Executive Director of the Discovery Museum located in Bridgeport. The Discovery Museum is an interactive experience for all ages focusing on art, science and space with an attendance of over 100,000 visitors annually. Ms. de Murias is also the Vice-Chairperson of Sound View Community Media, the newest affiliate of the Discovery Museum which offers television production, training and programming for six towns in Connecticut. The Discovery Museum is the first Museum in the United States to be granted the management of Public, Educational and Government access television stations.

Prior to joining the Discovery Museum in 1996, Ms. de Murias was an international banker for twenty years with Chase Manhattan and Chemical Bank living and working in Latin America, Asia, Europe and Australia. Ms. de Murias graduated from Kent School in Kent, CT.; Goucher College in Baltimore, Md. with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish; Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas with a Master's degree in Latin American Studies. She spent her junior year abroad at the University of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, Spain and attended various summer programs in Quito, Ecuador, Lima, Perú, and Guadalajara, Mexico. Ms. de Murias is on advisory councils at Kent School and Sacred Heart University. She is on the Board of Directors of Career Resources, a welfare to work organization in Bridgeport and the Greater Bridgeport Symphony. She lives in Bridgeport, Connecticut and Manhattan, New York.

She was appointed to the commission in 1998 by **Senate Minority Leader, M. Adela Eads** and re-appointed in 1999.

## **Efraín Rosado, Treasurer**



**(Public Citizen)** is a 26 year New Britain resident. He attended the Catholic University of Puerto Rico and graduated from Central Connecticut State University where he received a Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems.

He is employed at Cigna Corporation as a Systems Consultant. He is a former New Britain Parks and Recreation Commissioner; a member of the Saint Ann's Passion Play Cast and Board in New Britain; a member of Region 10, a New Britain Education Diversity Council, and served on the School Choice Commission created by Governor Rowland. Mr. Rosado coaches Little League Baseball and Junior Soccer.

He was appointed to the Commission in 1995, 1997, and re-appointed in 1999 by **House Minority Leader, Robert M. Ward**.

## **Raúl A. Rodríguez, Commissioner**



(**Environment**) resides in Wethersfield and is an Associate at Arnold & Associates in Hartford. He has practiced public housing/residential summary process eviction law and general civil law for the past twelve years.

He is a member of the Connecticut and New York Bars. Mr. Rodríguez received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Cornell University and received his Juris Doctorate Degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo, Faculty of Law. He is a member of the Connecticut Bar Association, the Hartford County Bar Association, The Hispanic National Bar Association and the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association. He is a member of the ASPIRA Hartford Programs Coordinating Committee. He is a charter member and Vice President of Public Relations for the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Toastmasters Club; and, Assistant Secretary and Membership Chairperson of the Hartford Evening Lions Club. He is a member of the Wethersfield Democratic Town Committee, Salvation Army Advisory Board, and Leadership Greater Hartford Class of 1999. Mr. Rodríguez wrote *"One Strike, You're Out. Evictions in Connecticut"* which was published in the June/July 1998 issue of the Connecticut Lawyer Magazine.

He is a former member of: the United Way of Greater Hartford - Board of Directors, Chair of the Affirmative Action Committee, Member of the Allocations Steering Committee and the Neighborhood Support Collaboration. He was Chairperson of the Hartford Fair Rent Commission; member of the Hartford Commission on the City Plan; Secretary of the Hartford Democratic Party; Secretary of South / Southwest Elderly Housing Corporation Board of Directors; and, the Board of Directors of Southend Community Services Corporation.

He was appointed to the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission in 1997 by **Senate Minority Leader M. Adela Eads** and elected Chairperson March 1998. He was re-appointed in 1999.

## **Manuel García, Commissioner**



(**Human Services**) was born and raised in Bridgeport. He is employed at Automation Design Concepts as a Controls Supervisor with many years of customer relations experience across the United States and Puerto Rico. He is an active member of the community. He is a chaplain with the Fairfield County Sheriffs Department of Connecticut. He provides religious service at Danbury Federal Correctional Center and at New Haven Correctional Center for Latino inmates. Mr. García has and continues to serve on various boards. He is associate Minister of Mission Good Shepherd Church, Inc. Milford, CT; a former Vice President of the Third Stone Ridge Co-op Board of Directors, a member of the Bridgeport Republican Town Committee; Justice of the Peace; a former Vice President of the South End Community Center and a member of the Royal Rangers instructing boys and men in religious and moral values.

He was appointed to the Commission in 1997 by **Governor John G. Rowland** and re-appointed in 1999.



## **Ramón A. Serbia, Commissioner**



(**Transportation**) of Stamford. Has studied in the areas of Physics and Mathematics at the University of Puerto Rico, Aeronautical Engineering at the University of St. Louis, Architecture at the University of Florida, and Business Administration at the Alexander Hamilton Institute, New York. He is a licensed architect in Connecticut and New York. Currently, he is the Executive Assistant to the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation assigned to the Bureau of Transportation. He was appointed by Governor John G. Rowland as Chief State Building Inspector for the State of Connecticut in June 1995. He is a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Council of States on Building Codes and Standards (NCSBCS). Mr. Serbia is a speaker and lecturer at colleges, universities and community development organizations in the areas of economic and community development and urban planning. He is a member of the Connecticut Republican Party; the Connecticut Republican Party Finance Committee and NAACP in Stamford. He is Chairman of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, Connecticut Chapter and former National Assistant Secretary of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly. He is the Co-Chair of Star 51 – Pro Statehood, Puerto Rico National Movement, a former advisor to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's Secretary of Housing and former advisor to the President of the Senate in Puerto Rico on Housing and Urban Affairs. He's been a consultant to the XIV Pan American Games in the Dominican Republic, Office of the President of the Republic, a delegate from Puerto Rico to the Pan American Federation of Architects Congress in Colombia, a former Vice President of the College of Engineers, Architects and Surveyors in Puerto Rico. He is a former member of the San Juan, Puerto Rico, Lions Club and Co-Chair of the New Majority Council of Connecticut. He is a former member of the Stamford Republican Town Committee.

He was appointed to the Commission by the **Minority Leader of the House of Representatives Robert M. Ward** in 1995, 1997 and re-appointed in 1999.

## **Alma L. Maya, Commissioner**



(**Public Citizen**) of Bridgeport, is the Executive Director of ASPIRA of Connecticut. She attended Sacred Heart University and Springfield College. Formerly, she was an Investigator for the State of Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, and a Business Officer for the Connecticut Development Authority. Ms. Maya has participated and volunteered in many organizations, among them: the City of Bridgeport's Charter Revision Commission; Puerto Rican Parade of Connecticut, Bridgeport Chapter, and Family Services Woodfield. She is a founding board member of ASPIRA of Connecticut, member of the State of Connecticut Board of Pardons, State Co-Chair of the Connecticut Latino Redistricting Committee, board member of the Legislative Electoral Action Program (LEAP), past President of the Puerto Rican Coalition, and a founding member of LPRAC. Currently, she is a board member of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition and a member of the Fairfield County Community Foundation Latino Advisory Committee.

She was appointed to the commission by **Senate Majority Leader George C. Jepsen** in 1997 and re-appointed in 1999.

## **Maritza Tirú, Commissioner**



**(Education)** of Waterbury, is the Director of Career Development and Placement at Naugatuck Valley Community-Technical College in Waterbury. She has taught English as a Second Language at the college. She has a Master's Degree from the University of Connecticut. Ms. Tirú is well known in the community and is very involved in many local organizations. These include: the Chamber of Commerce – Waterbury Leadership Program, Community Vision for Waterbury, Vice-Chair of the Educational Task Force, Literacy Volunteers of America – Waterbury Chapter, Mayor's Task Force Against Drugs,

Spanish Action Council – Past President 1992-1994, School-Based Health Center Planning Committee, American Red Cross – Waterbury Chapter. Waterbury PRIDE-N.A.A.C.P., CT Trails Girls Scout Council, Get Them Off Program (GTOP), Minority Empowerment Coalition – Vice-President, Northwest Collaboration Committee, UCONN Advisory Board, Waterbury Area Services Team, The Displaced Homemaker Program Advisory Board and Youth Advocacy Association of Greater Waterbury. Ms. Tirú was recently selected to serve a two-year term to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. She is also the student advisor to the Black Student Union and the Hispanic Student Union at the college.

Ms. Tirú was appointed to the Commission originally in 1995, reappointed in 1996, and reappointed again in 1999 by **Governor John G. Rowland**.

## **Carlos Vázquez, Commissioner**



**(Children and Youth Development)** of Bridgeport has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Sacred Heart University. Currently, he is the Director of Government Affairs at United Illuminating Company in New Haven. There, he develops and implements the company's agenda of issues for action before the State of Connecticut General Assembly and the United States Congress.

He has and continues to serve on various boards and is a founding member of the Association of Connecticut Lobbyists, President in 1996-1999 member of Board of Directors of Visiting Nurses Association, President of the Utilities State Government Organization, and former District Chairman of the Eastern Region, Savoy Athletic Club, member of Board of Directors & Sergeant at Arms of the Spanish American Development Agency (SADA), Commissioner and Vice Chairman of the City of Bridgeport's Zoning Board of Appeals. He is a member of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council as well as of the Government Affairs Council, Bridgeport Beardsley Park Lions Club, Bridgeport Jobs Advisory Board – Private Industry Council and its successor organization Bridgeport Career Resources, Inc. Board of Directors, and Liceo Cubano de Bridgeport. From 1996 to the present he has been Vice Chairman of the Bridgeport Democratic Town Committee.

Mr. Vázquez was appointed to the Commission in 1997 and re-appointed in 1999 by the **Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin B. Sullivan**.

## **Fernando Comulada, Commissioner**



(**Housing**) of Hartford, has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from the Catholic University of Puerto Rico and 3 years of graduate studies at Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Mr. Comulada served as a Hartford City Councilman from 1991-1993. He was a member of the Council's Housing Committee and served as Chairman of its Economic Development Committee. He also brings a wealth of experience in the corporate and business sectors to the commission with emphasis in the areas of economic development, business planning, accounting and budgeting. He is familiar with Hartford's neighborhoods and its urban environment. He also served on the State of Connecticut's Board of Governors for Higher Education to which he was appointed by former Governor William O'Neill. Mr. Comulada currently works as a Financial Advisor at Universal Financial Services Corporation in Hartford. He has also served as: a Mortgage Account Executive with People's Bank; Vice President, Team Leader and Relationship Manager for First Community Bank-BankBoston Connecticut; Vice President, Commercial Lending Department at Advest Bank; Proprietor and Manager of Bercom Distributors, Inc. International Winery & Liquor Store and Town Supermarket in Hartford; Vice President, Latin American Area, International Division for Bank of New England (formerly Connecticut Bank and Trust Company, N.A.). He also served for six years in the Comptroller's Office for the City of Norwalk. Mr. Comulada served in the United States Army, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and was honorably discharged. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for Valor, 2 Army Commendation Medals for meritorious service and the Vietnam Combat Medal.

He was appointed to the Commission in 1999 by **Speaker of the House Moira K. Lyons.**

## **Julián Nieves, III, M.D. Commissioner**



(**Health**) of Hartford, has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Biology with Honors from Andrews University in Michigan. He also holds a Doctor of Medicine Degree from Cornell University Medical College in New York. He completed his residency at the Yale Primary Care Internal Medicine Residency Program in New Haven. He is Board Certified in the State of Connecticut in the field of Internal Medicine. Dr. Nieves is currently the Assistant Director of the Department of Medicine at Hartford Hospital. He also serves as the Director for Community Relations, Medical Director of Salud Primero (Health First) all at Hartford Hospital. He serves as Medical Director of Ambulatory Care Practice-Compañeros en Salud (Partners in Health) at the Hispanic Health Council. Dr. Nieves is also an Assistant Professor with the Department of Medicine at the University of Connecticut's School of Medicine. From 1997 to 1998, Dr. Nieves was a Researcher with the Stay Well Health Center in the Yale Primary Care Internal Medicine Program where he investigated comprehensive primary care in inner city populations. He served as a Research Assistant with the Department of Medicine at the University of Connecticut's School of Medicine where he developed a self-report hunger scale in clinical study of malnutrition in Hartford, Connecticut. Dr. Nieves also worked as a Research Assistant with the Hispanic Health Council investigating the possible health hazard involving the use of elemental mercury in folk remedies. Dr. Nieves received an "Excellence in Teaching" award from the University of Connecticut Student Continuity Practice. He is also a member of the Connecticut Medical Society and the American Medical Society.

He was appointed to the Commission in 1999 by Senate **President Pro Tempore, Kevin Sullivan.**

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## **Manuel Díaz, Commissioner**

(**Public Safety**) of New Haven, attended New Haven Public Schools, the University of New Haven, New Hampshire College, and currently is attending Springfield College. He has been a New Haven Police Officer since 1976. During his tenure with the New Haven Police Department, he has worked in various divisions in the department. Presently, he holds the civil service rank of Lieutenant and is the Shift Commander on the midnight shift for the City of New Haven. He is also a board member of Junta for Progressive Action, LULAC Head Start, President of the National Latino Peace Officer Association, Connecticut Chapter, and a Trainer for Future at Yale University Child Study Center Fellowship Program. Mr. Díaz has received numerous Certificates of Appreciation; Special Achievement Awards of Commendation; Official Citations from the Connecticut General Assembly, and the City of New Haven Board of Aldermen. He is actively involved in promoting youth activities through sports. In 1996, he started a baseball program for kids ages 4-12. This program benefited 203 kids from New Haven's Hill area.

He was appointed to the Commission in 1995 and 1997 by former **Speaker of the House, Thomas D. Ritter** and reappointed in 1999 by **Speaker of the House, Moira K. Lyons**.

## **Tomás Reyes, Commissioner**

(**Public Safety**) of New Haven, has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Welfare/Public Administration from the University of New Haven and is working towards a Master's Degree in Public Health at the Yale University, School of Medicine.

He is a member of the Board at Empower New Haven, Inc., Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc., Hill Health Corporation, Hill Development Corporation. He is also a Ward Chairman for the Fourth Ward of the New Haven Democratic Town Committee. Mr. Reyes is a Manager for Communications and Public Information as well as an Assistant Administrator at Yale University's, Mental Health Center in New Haven, a position he has held since 1989. Prior to serving in this capacity, Mr. Reyes was a Staff Administrator at the Mental Health Center. He also served as a Consultant to the Mental Health Center. As Executive Director of Junta for Progressive Action, Inc., Mr. Reyes was responsible for the administration of one of the largest and oldest bilingual human resource development agencies in New Haven. Prior to holding this position, he served the agency in the capacity of Program Developer. Mr. Reyes administered a national model in the application of new technologies as Project Coordinator with Hill Community Coalition in New Haven. He has also held a variety of community-focused positions including Service Advisor for Business Services at SNET, Fairfield, CT; Executive Director of the Spanish Learning Center in Danbury, CT; Programs Administrator for the Latino Youth Development, Inc. of New Haven, CT; and, Coordinator of the Tuberculosis Control Project for Hill Health Center of New Haven, Connecticut.

Mr. Reyes was appointed in 2000 by the **Speaker of the House, Moira K. Lyons**.

# Legislative Mandates

## The Commission Shall:

1. Review and comment on any proposed state legislation and regulations that would affect the Latino and Puerto Rican populations in the state;
2. Advise and provide information to the Governor on the state's policies concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican communities;
3. Advise the Governor concerning the coordination and administration of state programs serving the Latino and Puerto Rican populations;
4. Maintain a liaison between the Latino and Puerto Rican communities and governmental entities;
5. Encourage Latino and Puerto Rican representation at all levels of state government, including state boards and commissions;
6. Secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of the Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state; and
7. Prepare and submit to the Governor an annual report concerning its activities with any appropriate recommendations concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state.

*(Excerpt from Section 2-120(c). Chapter 23d  
of the Connecticut General Statutes.)*



# Executive Director's Report



**Executive Director**  
Fernando Betancourt

This has been a very exciting year for us at the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission. We were able to support legislation that was embraced, supported and ultimately passed in the legislature. Legislation such as the Individual Development Accounts Program (which allow low income families to open up savings accounts that may be matched by public and private sources and used for specific purposes) was introduced by the State Treasurer's Office, supported by our agency and passed into law this past session. We also supported the restoration of voter rights, campaign finance reform, minimum wage, bilingual education, access and affordability to higher education, tax strategies to help the working poor - just to name a few. Much of the legislation we supported was passed by the legislature due to our collaboration with so many legislators that were in agreement to support such initiatives.

It was also an exciting year because we were able to bring to the forefront issues such as, workplace discrimination wherein the United States Equal Employment and Opportunities Commission and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund participated. The outcome of the public hearing held in collaboration with these two national agencies in May 2000 was the identification of many incidents of workplace discrimination practices. Several of these cases are being pursued by the attorneys from both these agencies on behalf of our communities in Connecticut.

Our agency held its second annual awards gala in celebration of the accomplishments of the many outstanding adult and youth leaders in our community. The event sold out with over 500 Latino and non-Latino prominent individuals in attendance that evening to help us meet one of our legislative mandates.

We commissioned the second analysis of the socio-economic conditions of Latinos throughout the state. This study was possible through a major grant received from the Graustein Memorial Fund that enabled us to retain the services of the Center for Research and Public Policy. The study includes the following phases. a survey of 1,001 resident Hispanics statewide, 389 Latino leaders throughout the state and, two focus groups held with Hispanic residents and one held among Hispanic leaders. We are in the process of finalizing this major report and will be holding a

major press conference to release its findings with the support of researchers and public policy individuals in early 2001.

We collaborated with numerous private and public agencies in support of such topics as the “Empowering Families to Build a Better Life” conference and the presentation of the first Latino Leadership Summit. These two conferences involve collaborations with such agencies as the Connecticut Institute for Municipal Studies, the Commission on Children, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Hartford Federation of Teachers, the United Way of the Capital Area, the Connecticut Voices for Children, African American Affairs Commission, Leadership Greater Hartford and the Latino Leadership Development Network. We also hosted a Latinos with Disabilities Forum in June 2000 in collaboration with the State Department of Social Services. We supported a conference entitled “Los Niños de Los Barrios” which was developed by Dr. Julio Morales of the University of Connecticut’s School of Social Work dealing with children of color in the foster care system.

## TOASTMASTERS CLUB



From Left to Right: David Busanet, Julie Serrano, Ruth Espinoza President Bonnie Lebron, Margaret Westwood, Commissioner Raúl Rodríguez, and Ann Smith

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission also supports a major program in the form of the “Toastmasters Club” which meets twice per month and hosts influential leaders from throughout the state. For the third straight year, we developed a legislative agenda and priorities working with the Latino State Delegation in order to more successfully introduce legislation that positively impacts our community.

We are making greater and greater strides every day towards the narrowing of the gaps in the social, economic and political position of the Latino and Puerto Rican communities throughout the state. I am very proud of the accomplishments of this Commission and encourage each and every one of you to become involved in our initiatives and to support our work.

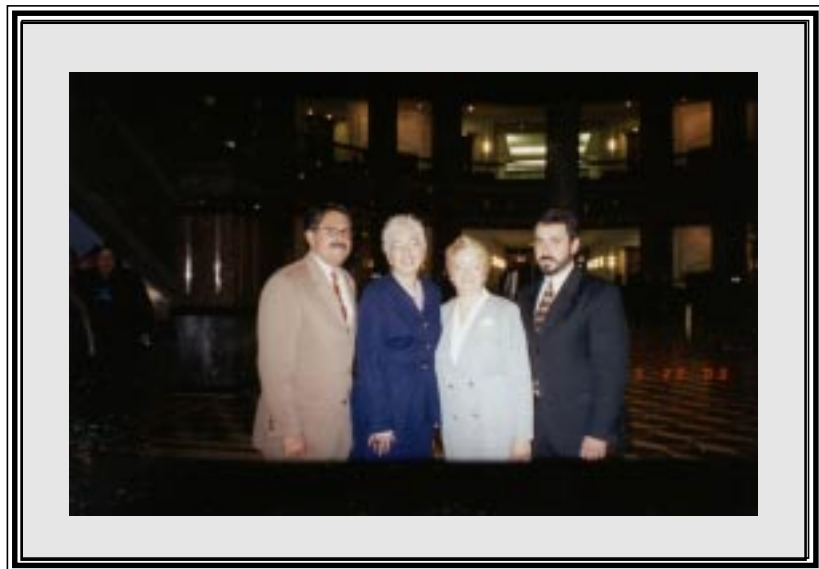
I look forward to further gains and an even more successful 2001.

Sincerely,

Fernando Betancourt  
Executive Director

# SPECIAL PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES

## Workplace Discrimination Public Hearing



From Left to Right: Juan A. Figueroa, President of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund; Ida L. Castro, Chairwoman of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; State Representative Minnie González; Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director of LPRAC.



The Workplace Discrimination Public Hearing was held at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, Connecticut on Tuesday, May 22, 2000. The hearing room was filled to capacity. Many people had to wait outside the hearing room and others chose to listen to the proceedings from the entrance to the hearing room.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, in collaboration with State Representative Minnie González and the United States Equal Employment and Opportunities Commission and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, held a Workplace Discrimination Public Hearing in the Legislative Office Building on Tuesday, May 22, 2000. This hearing allowed us the opportunity to identify whether workplace discrimination was taking place among companies in Connecticut and, if so, to determine what the impact was on our community. The turnout was outstanding and both national organizations were able to meet on the spot with those individuals who wanted to file a claim against their employers. One particular case that is currently being mediated by the EEOC and PRLDF is a language discrimination case where employees are being prohibited to speak in their native tongue at a major company in Hartford. If the agencies are unable to remedy the matter for these employees through mediation, then the Company will be taken to court.

## Latinos with Disabilities Conference

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission held a Latinos with Disabilities Forum in collaboration with the Hispanic Health Council and the Department of Mental Health. The Forum was well attended and was given television coverage by CTN.



A few of the participants of the *Latinos with Disabilities Forum* gathered at the atrium of the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, Connecticut for a group picture.

## Latino Agenda for the Next Millennium

The Commission began its work towards crafting an agenda for the new millennium. This included the development of legislative priorities to be submitted for action in the legislative session as well as authorizing the socio-economic study that was performed through grant funds received and by contracting with the Center for Research and Public Policy.



## Second Annual Gala-Awards Banquet



From Left to Right: State Representative Minnie González, Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, State Representative Edna García, State Representative John Martínez, and Mercedes Beltrán.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission held its second annual Awards Gala which included the participation of over 500 prominent Latino and non-Latino individuals from throughout the State of Connecticut.

We were able to recognize the following individuals and organizations for their achievements:

*Latino Citizens of the Year:*

**Tomás Reyes, Jr.**

**Peter M. Rosa**

*Promesa Youth Award:*

**Yaditza LaViera**

*Community Service Award:*

**Padres Abriendo Puertas;**

*Special Recognitions:*

**Amigos del Caribe,**

**Colombia Relief Committee,**

**Greater Bridgeport United Relief Committee**

**Honduras Relief Committee.**

By recognizing these outstanding individuals and organizations, we were able to meet one of our State mandates to promote awareness of the accomplishments of our communities.



From Left to Right: Lily Ruiz, Belen López, Claudia Carvajal, Dr. Ramón Rojano, State Representative Evelyn Mantilla, and Ana Alfaro.



## Latino Socio-Economic Study

Through a grant received from the Graustein Memorial Fund, the LPRAC was able to contract with the Center for Research and Public Policy in order to study the socio-economic conditions of our communities statewide. This study will help us determine those conditions that are prevalent which, in turn, will allow us to write legislation to begin addressing and alleviating barriers to success at work and home. The study will be ready for release at the beginning of the new year.

## Latino Agenda for the Next Millennium

The Commission began its work towards crafting an agenda for the new millennium. This included the development of legislative priorities to be submitted for action in the legislative session as well as authorizing the socio-economic study that was performed through grant funds received and by contracting with the Center for Research and Public Policy.

## Commission Retreat

We held a retreat with Commissioners and staff in order to look at ways that the commission could capitalize on its strengths and identify and rectify any weaknesses to accomplish our goals. The retreat was held February 11 and 12, 2000 and we invited consultants from the Connecticut Voices for Children and the National Executive Service Corps to help us implement those processes necessary for the success of the organization. We came away with a plan of action that is implemented on a daily basis.

## Puerto Rican Monument Support

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For further information regarding the monument, please refer to page 29.

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The “Organización de Puertorriqueños Unidos” approached us regarding their desire to commission the production of a monument in tribute to the Puerto Rican families of the state to be placed at Bushnell Park in Hartford. LPRAC agreed to support this project in the form of access to our database for fundraising purposes and to use our newsletter to advertise the monument and generate support. In addition, the Commission offered other suggestions for marketing of the project such as contacting the Hispanic Professional Network and Leadership Greater Hartford for additional publicity.

## Management Assessment Study

The Management Assessment Study was a result of the retreat held by the Commission back in February 2000. The study consists of the responsibilities of staff and commissioners, the types of committees the Commission should have in place in order to accomplish its goals and a strategic plan process. This study has been very helpful in redirecting our collective energies which has translated into the successes we have reported on throughout this document.

## Census 2000 Project

A press conference was held by LPRAC in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau regarding the development of a Statewide Advisory Committee to oversee the census count throughout the State of Connecticut. One of the reasons for holding the press conference was to mobilize against the Latino undercount in the state. The Commission ensured that community organizations received the information regarding the conference and our concerns in order to bring about their participation in getting out the word to the Latino and Puerto Rican communities in the state. Meetings were held regarding this important issue throughout the state. We closely collaborated with the Puerto Rican Legal and Education Fund on this project.

## U.S. Hispanic Leadership Conference

The Exec. Dir. for the Commission attended the U. S. Hispanic Leadership Conference which was held in Chicago, Illinois in October 1999. He was invited by one of the President of the United State's assistants, Mickey Ibarra, to discuss the President's agenda. The Commission's director took the opportunity to point out some of the areas of concern to our community: welfare to work, medication and the needs of elderly citizens, support of the budget issues from the federal government and getting more Latinos into the workforce. He was given telephone numbers for departments throughout the White House and participated in a conference call regarding immigration and naturalization issues. The conference was attended by over 10,000 individuals. Mr. Betancourt was also able to meet with the Governor of Puerto Rico and to network with other state contacts thereby spreading the word of the existence of the LPRAC in Connecticut and generating interest in what we do.

## Los Niños de los Barrios Conference sponsorship

The Commission, in collaboration with Dr. Julio Morales of the University of Connecticut's School of Social Work, sponsored a conference regarding "Los Niños de los Barrios". This very powerful conference was covered on the front page of The Hartford Courant.

## Navy from Vieques, Puerto Rico

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission wrote a resolution in support of the removal of the Navy from Vieques. The resolution was used by various organizations in order to craft their own in support of the Navy's removal from Vieques.

## Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

The Special Projects Director and Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission met with Executive Director Cynthia Watts Elder from the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities to discuss areas of common interest to our Commissions. Ms. Watts Elder also gave testimony regarding the lack of representation within state agencies and in state appointments at the Workplace Discrimination Hearing held by the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission in conjunction with State Representative Minnie Gonzalez, the United States Equal Employment and Opportunities Commission and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education fund in May 2000.

## Website Availability

The Commission has developed and maintains a website which includes information on our commissioners, staff and our activities. In addition, we post information that is time sensitive as another way of publicizing the events we sponsor and support.

## Latino Leadership Development Network

LPRAC agreed to co-sponsor a biennial summit on leadership development in cooperation with the Latino Leadership Development Network and Leadership Greater Hartford. The mission of this conference is to highlight and spotlight the underrepresented talent available within our community that currently goes unnoticed. We also seek to cultivate young leaders to begin to take their place at the table of participation in society. LPRAC was delighted to come on board with this summit.

## Empowering Families to Build a Better Life.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission agreed to co-sponsor a major conference on empowering families to build a better life in the form of education reform. The goal of this conference is to bring together like-minded people from throughout the state who have an interest and desire in the revamping of the state's educational system thereby empowering families to get every child educated and prepared to lead the best life they can. As part of this mission, the outcome of the conference will be the creation of a blueprint on education reforms that will help to begin this work on an on-going basis for the next two to five years. LPRAC is proud to be one of the co-sponsors of this conference.

## Forum on Elderly Care

The Commission co-sponsored a forum on elderly care in collaboration with the Dept. of Social Services. We provided materials that outlined information on the various programs available for assistance with elderly care or providing options with the provision of elderly care.

# Legislative Priorities

## Professional Association of Bilingual Education Administrators

The Professional Association of Bilingual Education Administrators approached the Commission for assistance with legislation affecting English language learners. Meetings were held where the PABEA took a position on the matter. As a result, strategy sessions were held and it was agreed that a meeting would be held with the State Department of Education leading to a final meeting with the Commissioner of Education, Ted Sergi.

## Restoration of Voter Rights

Collaborating with a number of state legislators including Representative Kenneth Green (D - 1 District) and Deputy Majority Leader John Martínez (D - 95 District), along with DemocracyWorks, the LPRAC supported the restoration of voter rights for people who have been convicted of a felony and served a prison sentence to register to vote when they are on probation. The LPRAC believes that Connecticut should change the existing law to allow for an “End of Incarceration” standard that in effect would re-enfranchise more than 36,000 people in the state. Of that number, according to the Office of Legislative Research 10, 235 are Latinos. These figures present an alarming picture of community disenfranchisement that we share with other communities of color. The commission’s support for this legislation represents a unique opportunity to send a powerful message to the Connecticut legislature: We believe in the rehabilitation of our citizens and that society is ready to provide the mechanism to reintegrate these individuals in the democratic process. A bulletin board campaign is planned in order to get out the information on where people can call to have their voting rights restored upon release from prison.

## Campaign Finance Reform

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission collaborated with legislative initiatives spearheaded by State Representative Andrew Fleischmann (D-18 District) and other advocates for campaign finance reform in order to pass legislation that would give individuals from our community an opportunity to equally participate in the electoral process. Our goal in supporting this legislation is to allow for a fair and equitable means of funding a political campaign so that Latino candidates for elective office have a better chance of competing dollar for dollar. LPRAC testified before the Government Administration and Elections Committee in February supporting this bill.



## Filthy Five Legislation Support

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission was approached by State Representative Christopher L. Caruso (D - 126th District) who was seeking support for legislation that would look at five power plants located in Bridgeport, New Haven, Norwalk, Montville and Middletown that are releasing a high percentage of pollution into the air. The pollutants involved are hydrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide. These cause respiratory problems in humans and are especially hazardous to people suffering from asthma. As we know, there is a large percentage of asthma sufferers in our communities and at least 3 of the towns and cities affected have a high concentration of Latino residents. The act is supported by 112 other co-sponsors statewide and LPRAC agreed to support the legislation as well.

### **Legislative 2000 Priorities**

Supported or Co-sponsored the Following Legislation

**Court Interpreters & Creation of Accreditation  
Standards in Connecticut**

**Bilingual Education**

Access and Affordability to Higher Education

**Digital and Technological Divide**

Tax Strategies to Help Working Poor Families With Children

**Affordable Housing**

Individual Development Accounts

**Minimum Wage**

Voting Rights Restoration Project

**Family and Medical Leave Act-Pay Equity**

## Public Act # 00-192 (Individual Development Accounts)

The most significant law affecting the Latino and Puerto Rican community in Connecticut enacted during the 2000 Legislative Session is the establishment of a statewide Individual Development Account (IDA). This new law will promote asset accumulation for low-income workers. An

IDA is a savings account into which an eligible individual periodically deposits money that can be matched by public and private sources and used for specific purposes. ( HB 5018).

**The Commission developed a legislative priorities agenda working with its Priorities and Legislation Committee that was presented during the 2000 Legislative Session.**

## Public Act # 00-13 (Supportive Housing Pilot Initiative)

The other good news during the 2000 legislative session for our community came from legislation adopted via the state budget. It provides \$2 million to allow leveraging of federal funds for supportive housing serving

people with psychiatric disability or chemical dependency.

## Public Act # 00-195 (Public Housing)

A pilot program to privatize state-financed public housing was repealed. Congratulations should be given to all the members of the Connecticut Housing Coalition, which the LPRAC is part of, for their successful efforts to repeal the pilot, which allowed sale or lease of public housing developments in three cities, as it failed to provide protections for current residents.

## Public Act # 00-144 (Minimum Wage)

The LPRAC is pleased that the state legislature increased the minimum wage. This bill increases the minimum wage by 55¢ over a two-year period. It increases the minimum wage from \$6.15 to \$6.40 an hour beginning January 1, 2001 and to \$6.70 beginning January 1, 2002. The LPRAC has supported the laws increasing the minimum wage in the past. We have seen that the state can achieve economic growth and prosperity while increasing the level of pay of those who need it the most. It is extremely difficult to sustain a family or even get a fair rent in several markets (like Fairfield County) where Latinos are concentrated with incomes based on minimum wages.

Because Latinos in Connecticut are underrepresented in the high tech fields, we are more dependent on lower paying jobs in the manufacturing and service industries. Increasing the minimum wage is only one strategy to augment our community's success rate while we transition into the new economy.

## Public Act # 00-119 (Linguistic Access in Acute Care Hospitals)

Another significant law enacted this past Legislative Session is An Act Concerning Linguistic Access In Acute Care Hospitals. According to this new law, hospitals dealing with severe cases will now need to: (1) develop and review a policy on providing interpreters services to non-English speaking patients; (2) Ensure, to the extent possible, availability of interpreter services to patients whose primary language is spoken by a group comprising not less than 5% of those residing in the hospital's geographic service area; (3) keep a list of qualified interpreters; (4) notify hospital staff of interpreter requirements; (5) post multilingual notices about interpreters; (6) review standardized forms to determine the need to translate them for the public; (7) establish liaisons to the non-English speaking communities in the service area. (SB 539)

## Public Act # 00-154 (Racial Disparity Commission in the Criminal Justice System)

This new law established a commission dedicated to eliminating racial and ethnic disparity in the criminal justice system. The law creates a 21-member Commission that shall prepare plans to reduce racial and ethnic disparity in the system and report to the legislature on resources needed to reduce the disparity. Among other subjects the commission will be accountable for developing a curriculum to train juvenile justice system employees on cultural competency issues and strategies to address disproportionate minority confinement. (SB 462)

## Public Act # 00-204 (Bilingual Education)

The LPRAC monitored the passage of a new law that requires the Hartford school system to implement a pilot two-way language program in two schools. The program must provide instruction in each language for 50% of the instructional time each day. The State Department of Education and the State Board of Trustees for the Hartford School System must evaluate the program's effectiveness and report the results to the Legislature's Education Committee by July 1, 2001. (HB 5922)

# Participation, speaking engagements & presentations

The following is a list of major presentations or participation by the Executive Director on behalf of the LPRAC

American Leadership Forum Participation.

National Puerto Rican Coalition Conference Attendance.

National Conference on State Legislatures Attendance.

Connecticut Hispanic Association of State Employees' Presentation.

Testified regarding Fleet Bank's merger with Bank Boston.

Presentation at Fairfield University Regarding the Future of Hispanic America.

Participated in the Judicial Branch's Hispanic Heritage Month celebration.

Participated in the Hate Crime Conference sponsored by the US Attorney's Office.

Presentation at the Hispanic Health Council regarding people in the Latino community living with disability.

Appointed to the Family Leave Act Task Force by the General Assembly.

Presentation at the Housing Coalition Conference.

Presentation at the Forum on Commission on Aging in Waterbury.

Presentation at the Sexual Assault Crisis-Laws of the State Conference.

Participated in the survey and focus group of the Funders Collaborative for Strong Latino Communities.

Presentations on Vieques at Trinity College, Wesleyan University and the New Haven Public Library.

Panelist to discuss the Social State of Connecticut Report.

Conversations with Attorney General for development of a Latino Consumer University.

State Treasurer named the Executive Director to the Fleet-Boston Bank Regional Advisory Board on Community Reinvestment.

Participated in the Comité Amigos del Caribe Relief Fund for Venezuela

Received an Appreciation Award from the Connecticut Association of Latin Americans in Higher Education.

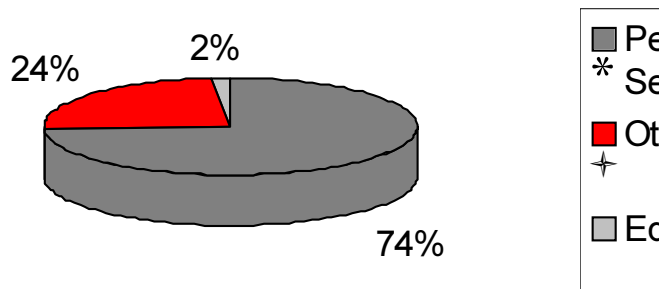
Provided information for use in a Waterbury-Republican Newspaper article on the Greater Waterbury Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Invited to Serve on the Board of Fellows of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education.

# The Budget 1999-2000

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>APPROPRIATED</u>
<i>Personnel Services</i>	\$ 235,391.00
<i>Other Expenses</i>	\$ 75,730.00
<i>Equipment</i>	\$ 5,250.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 316,371.00</b>

## The Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Budget 1999-2000



\* **Personnel Services** increased by one position this fiscal year allowing for the employment of a Special Projects/Grant Coordinator.

+ **Other expenses** includes contracted services as well as staff development & printing costs.



# Puerto Rican Family Monument

## *A Glimpse at the Sculptor: José Buscaglia*

José Buscaglia is considered, without a doubt, one of the world's finest and most accomplished sculptors and one of Puerto Rico's foremost artists. Born in the capital city of San Juan in 1938, his involvement with art dates from the precocious age of eight. During this early phase in his career he underwent intensive training with the Catalanian teacher Ismael D'Alzina. While a student at Harvard University, he spent a year abroad in Barcelona, Spain, working at the studio of world renowned sculptor Enrique Monjo. He also took courses at the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Jorge where Picasso, Dalí, and Miró had studied earlier. Following his 1960 graduation he collaborated with Monjo working as his assistant. Returning to Puerto Rico in 1962, Buscaglia held positions for 18 years at the University of Puerto Rico as a professor, sculptor in residence, and director of fine arts.



**Jose Buscaglia**, one of the worlds most famous sculptors presents Connecticut with a full size model of the **Puerto Rican Family Monument** ready to be cast in bronze. It was approved by the Court of Common Council in the city of Hartford to be placed in front of the State Capitol in Bushnell Park.

His lifelong interest in the nature of the creative process and thinking skills, led to his participation in the designing and implementation of experimental educational programs in Venezuela from 1979 to 1985. A joint effort by Harvard University, Rockefeller Center in New York, and several times in Washington D.C., Barcelona, and Madrid.

In 1968, The New York Times referred to Buscaglia's bronze bust of Robert Frost, unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C.) as: "Unofficially the

most important gift to the gallery since its opening..." Artist/Professor Ben Shahn said of José Buscaglia: "There are few sculptors, young or old, who have the courage to go their own ways, not to be overwhelmed by trends and by journalistic approval; there are fewer still who have the competence to do the kind of work that José can and does."

Buscaglia has authored close to 40 public monuments in Puerto Rico, The Virgin Islands and the United States. He is a Fellow of the National Sculpture Society and a founding member of the Academy of Arts & Sciences of Puerto Rico. As an educator he has taught and lectured at leading institutions in Europe, Latin America and the United States, and has published considerably on the teaching of intelligence and the voluntary control of the creative process.

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Donations for the Puerto Rican Family Monument can be made at the following place:

Fleet Bank  
85 Seymour Street  
Hartford, CT 06106.  
Account: **9398069374**

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# The Staff

Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director

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Sandra Cruz-Serrano, Special Projects/Grant Coordinator

Augustina Pérez, Senior Legislative Secretary

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***THE LATINO & PUERTO RICAN AFFAIRS  
COMMISSION TOASTMASTERS CLUB***

Invites you to attend the only bilingual communications skills building organization in the state.

The Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Toastmasters Club will help you develop your bilingual communications skills in either English or Spanish through multiple roles, speeches and competitions.

For further information, please call us at:  
**(860) 240-8330.**

***This report was prepared by:***

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***Thank You***

To Patricia Estill, Special Projects Director, of the Commission on  
Children for her support in providing photographs  
for the 2000 annual report.

Special Thanks go to *Darion Flores* whose  
picture is on the cover page of this report.

Thank you to the many agencies and organizations who  
collaborated with LPRAC this past year

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

COMMISSION MEETINGS  
ARE HELD EVERY THIRD  
WEDNESDAY  
OF EACH MONTH AT THE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING,  
SUITE 2600  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

5:30 PM -- 8:00 PM

*We are always looking to add  
to our talent bank and we ask that  
if you are not already listed,  
please contact our office to find  
out how your name can be part  
of our list. This database is help-  
ful in generating candidates to  
serve on State Boards and Com-  
missions.*



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